

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION  
BUREAU OF CONSUMER PROTECTION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20580

VIA: ELECTRONIC MAIL

TO: [company name]

RE: NUCLEAR RADIATION PROTECTION CLAIMS MADE ON YOUR  
WEBSITE

DATE: March 20, 2003

The Federal Trade Commission staff has reviewed marketing claims on your website relating to potassium iodide, potassium iodate or similar products (potassium iodide products). We remind you that the FTC Act requires that health and safety-related claims, such as claims that potassium iodide products can protect against a nuclear or radiation incident, must be supported by competent and reliable scientific evidence. In other words, it is against the law to make health and safety claims without scientific support or to exaggerate the benefits of products or services you are promoting.

Potassium iodide can help protect the thyroid from cancer by blocking uptake by the thyroid gland of radioactive iodine that could be released into the atmosphere in the unlikely event of an accident at a nuclear reactor. Its use in such an event has been recognized by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) as a reasonable protective measure, secondary to evacuation. Potassium iodide, however, provides only very specialized protection of one organ of the body against one specific radioactive isotope and not against other hazards associated with a nuclear reactor accident. Therefore, **you should not claim or imply, including through the use of a product name, web site name, depiction, or any other means, that potassium iodide products provide more general protection for the body from other forms of radiation exposure or from other hazards associated with a nuclear incident.**

Potassium iodide is unlikely to provide any protective benefit in the event of a "dirty bomb" for two reasons. (1) A "dirty bomb" uses conventional explosives to spread radioactive contamination. Radioactive iodine is only one of many types of radioactive materials. Because it does not remain radioactive for long, it is unlikely that radioactive iodine would be the type of material used in a "dirty bomb." (2) A dirty bomb does not cause a nuclear or "fission" reaction and so the explosion itself would not create any radioactive iodine. Therefore, **you should not claim or imply, including through the use of a product name, web site name, depiction, or any other means, that potassium iodide products are likely to provide any protection against exposure to a "dirty bomb."**

Although potassium iodide appears to be generally safe for short-term use at appropriate doses, it can cause side effects. At higher doses, or with long-term use, those effects could be serious. People allergic to iodine should not take potassium iodide. Therefore, **you should not claim or imply that potassium iodide products are absolutely safe or that they present no risk of side effects.**

Finally, you should be aware that potassium iodide products for protection against radiation exposure must be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) prior to distribution. A listing of potassium iodide products approved by FDA for over the counter use is available through FDA's Electronic Orange Book, available through [www.fda.gov/cder](http://www.fda.gov/cder).

### **Action Requested**

We strongly urge that you review all claims that you are making for your products. If your claims cannot be supported by competent and reliable scientific evidence - the kind of evidence that would be relied upon by those with adequate training and experience in the relevant field - your claims should be revised or removed immediately.

FTC investigators have copied and preserved the pages of your online promotional materials and will be revisiting your website soon.

Please notify us via electronic mail to [cureall@ftc.gov](mailto:cureall@ftc.gov) within 7 days of the specific actions you have taken to address the agency's concerns.